

CLAIMS

THE CLAIMED INVENTION IS:

1. A method for managing asset tracking information related to an asset within a supply chain, the supply chain comprising a plurality of supplier entities capable of accessing a centralized asset tracking datastore, the method comprising:
 - (a) recording information pertaining to the asset in an independent datastore, the information being provided by an upstream supplier entity;
 - (b) identifying the asset with a unique identification code;
 - (c) associating the recorded information from the upstream supplier entity with the unique identification code;
 - (d) recording information pertaining to the asset in the independent datastore, the information being provided by a downstream supplier entity; and
 - (e) associating the recorded information from the downstream supplier entity with the unique identification code.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein act (a) comprises:
creating a record within a database; and
entering information provided by the upstream supplier entity into the record.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein act (b) comprises:
identifying the asset with a unique Universal Resource Locator (URL), the URL corresponding to a resource.
4. The method of claim 3, wherein:
the resource comprises a webpage; and
act (c) comprises constructing a definition for the webpage, such that the webpage is populated with at least a subset of the information in the record.
5. The method of claim 4, wherein act (d) comprises:
opening the record within the database; and

entering information provided by the downstream supplier entity into the record.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein act (e) comprises:
constructing a definition for the webpage, such that the webpage is populated
with at least a subset of the information provided by the downstream supplier.

7. A method for managing asset tracking information related to an asset
within a supply chain, the supply chain comprising a plurality of supplier entities
capable of accessing a centralized asset tracking datastore, the method comprising:

- (a) recording information pertaining to a first asset, the information being
provided by an upstream supplier entity;
- (b) identifying the first asset with a first unique identification code;
- (c) associating the recorded information from the upstream supplier entity
with the first unique identification code;
- (d) recording information pertaining to a second asset, the information being
provided by a downstream supplier entity, the second asset possessing the first asset as
a constituent;
- (e) identifying the second asset with a second unique identification code;
- (f) associating the recorded information from the downstream supplier
entity with the second unique identification code; and
- (g) associating the first unique identification code with the second unique
identification code.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein act (b) comprises:
identifying the first asset with a first unique Universal Resource Locator (URL),
corresponding to a first resource.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein act (e) comprises:
identifying the second asset with a second unique Universal Resource Locator
(URL), corresponding to a second resource.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein:

the first resource comprises a first webpage;
the second resource comprises a second webpage; and
act (g) comprises associating the first unique URL and the second unique URL
with a hyperlink on the first webpage, the hyperlink pointing to the second webpage.

11. The method of claim 9, wherein:
the first resource comprises a first webpage;
the second resource comprises a second webpage; and
act (g) comprises associating the first unique URL and the second unique URL
with a hyperlink on the second webpage, the hyperlink pointing to the first webpage.

12. A method for providing asset tracking information related to an asset
within a supply chain, the supply chain comprising a plurality of supplier entities
capable of accessing a centralized asset tracking datastore, the method comprising:

(a) receiving an asset from an upstream supplier;
(b) deriving from the asset a unique identification code;
(c) gathering information pertaining to the asset;
(d) associating the information with the unique identification code; and
(e) transmitting the information, associated with the unique identification
code, to the centralized asset tracking datastore.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein act (b) comprises:
reading a Universal Resource Locator printed upon the asset.

14. The method of claim 12, wherein act (b) comprises:
reading a Universal Resource Locator printed upon a tag attached to the asset.

15. The method of claim 12, wherein act (b) comprises:
reading a Universal Resource Locator printed upon packaging associated with
the asset.

16. The method of claim 12, wherein act (b) comprises:

Optically scanning a Universal Resource Locator encoded in an optically scanable format, printed on a medium associated with the asset.

17. The method of claim 12, wherein act (b) comprises:

optically scanning a Universal Resource Locator encoded in an optically scanable format, printed upon the asset.

18. The method of claim 12, wherein act (b) comprises:

magnetically scanning a Universal Resource Locator encoded in a magnetically scanable format, disposed on a medium associated with the asset.

19. The method of claim 12, wherein act (b) comprises:

magnetically scanning a Universal Resource Locator encoded in a magnetically scanable format, disposed upon the asset.

20. The method of claim 12, wherein acts (d) and (e) comprise:

entering the information into a webpage, the webpage being uniquely associated with the asset.

21. A method for accessing asset tracking information related to an asset within a supply chain, the supply chain comprising a plurality of supplier entities capable of entering information into a centralized asset tracking datastore, the method comprising:

- (a) receiving an asset from an upstream supplier;
- (b) deriving from the asset a unique identification code; and
- (c) retrieving information related to the asset from a centralized asset tracking datastore based upon the unique identification code, the information having been gathered by an independent upstream supplier entity.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein act (b) comprises:

reading a Universal Resource Locator affixed upon the asset.

23. The method of claim 21, wherein act (b) comprises:
reading a Universal Resource Locator printed affixed to a tag attached to the
asset.

24. The method of claim 21, wherein act (b) comprises:
reading a Universal Resource Locator printed upon packaging associated with
the asset.

25. The method of claim 21, wherein act (b) comprises:
optically scanning a Universal Resource Locator encoded in an optically
scannable format, printed on a medium associated with the asset.

26. The method of claim 21, wherein act (b) comprises:
optically scanning a Universal Resource Locator encoded in an optically
scannable format, printed upon the asset.

27. The method of claim 21, wherein act (b) comprises:
magnetically scanning a Universal Resource Locator encoded in a magnetically
scannable format, disposed on a medium associated with the asset.

28. The method of claim 21, wherein act (b) comprises:
magnetically scanning a Universal Resource Locator encoded in a magnetically
scannable format, disposed upon the asset.

29. The method of claim 21, wherein acts (b) and (c) comprise:
deriving from the asset a unique Universal Resource Locator (URL); and
using the URL to access a webpage uniquely associated with the asset, the
webpage containing information related to the asset.

30. A method for managing asset tracking information related to an asset within a supply chain, the supply chain comprising a plurality of supplier entities capable of accessing a centralized asset tracking datastore, the method comprising:
- (a) gathering information pertaining to an asset;
 - (b) transmitting the information to the centralized asset tracking datastore, the information being associated with the asset, independent of any particular transaction;
 - (c) sending the asset from an upstream entity to a downstream entity;
 - (d) deriving from the asset a unique identification code, in response to having received the asset;
 - (e) gathering downstream information pertaining to the asset;
 - (f) associating the downstream information with the unique identification code, independent of any particular transaction;
 - (g) transmitting the downstream information, associated with the unique identification code, to the centralized asset tracking datastore; and
 - (h) recording the downstream information from the downstream provider in association with information from the upstream entity.

31. The method of claim 30, wherein act (b) comprises:
entering the information into a webpage, the webpage being uniquely associated with the asset.

32. The method of claim 31, wherein acts (f) and (g) comprise:
entering the downstream information into the webpage.

33. A method for providing asset tracking information related to an asset within a supply chain, the supply chain comprising a plurality of entities capable of accessing a centralized asset tracking datastore, the method comprising:

- (a) gathering information pertaining to an asset, said information being associated with an identification code designating the asset, independent of any transaction;

(b) transmitting the information to the centralized asset tracking datastore;
(c) passing the asset to a downstream entity; and
(d) retrieving from the centralized asset tracking datastore information gathered and associated with a unique identification code, which is, in turn, associated with the asset, by a downstream entity.

34. A product that has been handled in an asset-based information tracking supply chain, the product comprising:

an asset; and
a unique identification code encoded upon a medium attached to the asset, the unique identification code corresponding to a web page for presenting information related to the asset.

35. The product of claim 34, wherein the unique identification code encoded upon a medium comprises a magnetic strip attached to the asset and encoding a Universal Resource Locator.

36. The product of claim 34, wherein the unique identification code encoded upon a medium comprises a tag attached to the asset, the tag having the unique identification code printed thereupon.

37. The product of claim 34, wherein the unique identification code encoded upon a medium comprises an optical strip attached to the asset and encoding a Universal Resource Locator.

38. The product of claim 34, wherein the unique identification code encoded upon a medium comprises a barcode attached to the asset and encoding a Universal Resource Locator.

39. A system for storing and making available asset-related information regarding an asset within a supply chain, the supply chain comprising a plurality of entities capable of accessing a centralized datastore, the system comprising:
- the datastore, configured and arranged to store information related to an asset as an information set;
 - a server, in communication with the datastore, the server being configured and arranged to implement a definition of a webpage, the webpage being defined so as to require webpage population with at least a subset of the information set stored in the datastore, and the webpage being uniquely associated with the asset; and
 - a network configured and arranged to provide information connectivity between the server and business systems possessed by the entities comprising the supply chain.

40. The system of claim 39, wherein the server is further configured and arranged to implement a definition of a webpage, the webpage being configured and arranged to contain a hyperlink pointing to a webpage uniquely associated with a second asset, the second asset being associated with the first asset.